

## **Lesser Celandine Named Kentucky's Least Wanted Plant of 2011**

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**DESCRIPTION:** *Ranunculus ficaria* is a perennial herbaceous plant in the buttercup family. It is low-growing and has kidney- to heart-shaped dark green, shiny, stalked leaves. Its flowers are borne singly on delicate stalks and have eight glossy, butter-yellow petals. It blooms in early March and April. Pale bulblets form in the leaf axils.

**ORIGIN:** A native of Europe, lesser celandine was introduced for use as an ornamental. Colorful varieties of this plant are available commercially in the U.S. All varieties of lesser celandine have the potential to escape cultivation and can readily invade natural areas.

**EXTENT IN KENTUCKY:** Lesser celandine is becoming more common throughout the northern portion of the state, from Jefferson County to Lewis County. It is found in a variety of habitats including floodplains, forested wetlands, moist woodlands, thickets, lawns and gardens.

**IMPACT:** Lesser celandine emerges prior to native species, making it particularly threatening to native spring ephemerals such as bloodroot, wild ginger, spring beauty, cut-leaved toothwort, Dutchman's breeches, harbinger-of-spring, twinleaf, squirrel-corn, trout lily, trilliums, and Virginia bluebells. Lesser celandine spreads mostly by the dispersal of its bulblets and tuberous roots.

**MANAGEMENT:** The best management is to avoid a future problem by not planting this highly invasive species in your landscape. Grubbing the plant out of the ground often only increases it, by allowing its bulblets and root tubers to become established in disturbed soil. Mechanical removal can be an option for a small population, but the soil must be painstakingly searched to ensure the removal of all roots and bulblets. All plant material must be bagged.

Herbicide treatments are the most effective weapon against this species. As a foliar treatment, apply a 2% solution of glyphosate (Roundup) and water to all foliage until it is wet. Do not apply if rainfall is expected within two hours following application. Applicators should be careful not to treat adjacent native spring wildflower species! For populations occurring along streams, be sure to use herbicide that is labeled for aquatic use.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Can be accessed through the Plant Conservation Alliance's *Ranunculus ficaria* fact sheet: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/rafi1.htm>.

Help document the extent of this alien invader in the Commonwealth. If you find it, please add records to the EDDMapS Web site: <http://www.eddmaps.org>.

Kentucky's Least Wanted Plants from 2001 through 2010 can be seen at the KY-EPPC Web site: <http://www.se-eppc.org/ky/>.